

A Gift for The General

General Chen lived in a city in China a long time ago. He was a great general whose well-trained army always defeated the country's enemies.

Everyone treated the general with respect. Now and then he received gifts from people he knew as well as from strangers. General Chen was often heard to say, "It is better to give than to receive." Then he always smiled and added, "But I like to receive."

Perhaps that is the reason he got so many gifts. People probably thought that there were worse things in life than being on the good side of a powerful general.



One day the general received a gift that was truly amazing. It was a huge elephant. The elephant stood as high as it was long, and it stood very high.

An elephant in China was a rare sight in those days. And an elephant of that size well, you can imagine how General Chen's servants stared at the beast in the courtyard.

"What a magnificent elephant!" the general exclaimed. "I must show it to my friends."

So the general arranged for his friends to come to a party at his home. Famous and important people hurried to the general's mansion. You see, word of the enormous elephant had spread throughout the city. Everyone was curious to look at the beast.

Among the guests were many well-known people. They had the best and the brightest minds in the city. There were scientists and artists. There were also important men who, like the general, were in the army.

When the general judged that the time was right, he led everyone to the courtyard. There one and all gazed with wonder and delight at the general's elephant.

"What an astonishing elephant!" the guests said to one other. They shook the general's hand, while the general beamed with pleasure.

Then someone said, "Tell us, general. How much does the elephant weigh?"

The general turned to his chief aide. "Tell me," said the general, "how much does this elephant weigh?"

The aide thought for a moment. Then he answered. "Why it weighs very much."

"Yes," said the general, "but how much does it weigh?"

"That is not possible to know," said the aide. "You see," he explained, "we do not have a scale big enough to weigh an elephant. So no one can say what this elephant weighs."

The general turned to his guests. As I have said, his guests had the best and the brightest minds in the city.

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5
LA.E.1.2.2 Plot/Conflict Form A

“Surely,” said the general, “there must be some way to find out what this elephant weighs. Can anyone think of a way?”

The guests were silent until the aide spoke up. “You see, General,” he explained once again, “there is no scale big enough for an elephant, so it is impossible to know much this elephant weighs.”

“Yes,” the guests murmured to each other, as they nodded their heads, “it is impossible to know how much this elephant weighs.”

General Chen’s little daughter had been listening with interest to this. “Excuse me, father,” she said, “but I think I know how to find out how much the elephant weighs.”

General Chen smiled. “Dear daughter,” he said, “do you believe that you can succeed when my guests here could not?”

“It is easy,” said the child. “You must lead the elephant onto a boat by the dock at the edge of the river. The weight of the elephant will push the boat down into the water. The water will make a water line around the boat.”

“Yes?” said the father.

“Then lead the elephant back to the shore. When the elephant is off the boat, the boat will rise in the water. Fill the boat with stones until it sinks to the same water line around the boat. Weigh all of the stones. The weight of the stones is the elephant’s weight.”

General Chen snapped his fingers and servants came forward.

General Chen commanded, “Lead the elephant onto a boat by the dock at the edge of the river!”

That is what they did. They led the elephant onto the boat, and later they led it away. They filled the boat with stones until it sank to the same level it was at under the elephant’s weight. Then they weighed the stones and found out how much the elephant weighed.

General Chen was delighted. Once again, he invited his friends to a party at his house.

After everyone arrived, the general said, “I have made this party in honor of my daughter. I think you must agree that she is a genius.”

One of the guests frowned. “A genius!” he said. “Why, her plan was not very hard. In fact, it was easy. Anyone here might have thought of that plan.”

“Ah, yes,” said General Chen, “but nobody did. It seems simple enough now – now that it has been done. But it took a genius to think of it first!”

Who could say that was not so? Nobody could. And there was no prouder man in all of China than General Chen.



Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5
LA.E.1.2.2 Plot/Conflict Form A

Name _____ **Date** _____

Directions: Read the passage “A Gift for the General”, then circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. What does General Chen’s little daughter do to help solve her father’s problem?
 - A. She finds a scale big enough to weigh the elephant.
 - B. She gives the general a reason to have another party.
 - C. She thinks of a plan to weigh the elephant.
 - D. She tells her father how much the elephant weighs.

2. General Chen calls his daughter a genius because
 - A. she came up with a very complicated solution.
 - B. she succeeded when his guests could not.
 - C. she attends a party with the best and the brightest people in the city.
 - D. she was such a small girl to think of this great plan.

3. What is General Chen’s BIGGEST problem in the story?
 - A. He wants to know how much the elephant weighs.
 - B. He needs a very large scale to weigh the elephant.
 - C. His elephant was too big to keep in his home.
 - D. His bright guests can not say what the elephant weighs.

4. When people give him gifts, General Chen says, “It is better to give than receive” then he adds “But I like to receive” because he wants
 - A. everyone to treat him with respect.
 - B. people to stay on his good side.
 - C. to give gifts to people.
 - D. people to keep giving him gifts.

5. General Chen snaps his fingers and commands his servants to lead the elephant on to a boat because
 - A. he is angry that no one came up with a better idea.
 - B. he wants to prove to his daughter that her idea is foolish.
 - C. he thinks his daughter’s plan is a good one.
 - D. he is amused by his daughter’s suggestion.

<p style="text-align: center;">Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5 LA.E.1.2.2 Plot/Conflict Form A</p>
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Answer Key – A Gift for the General

LA.E.1.2.2: The student identifies plot development or conflict resolution in a story and/or identifies how story events contribute to the plot development or conflict resolution. The student also makes simple inferences or draws conclusions regarding story elements.

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